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SUBJECT: JERUSALEM MEDIA REACTION (10/27): POLITICAL AND SECURITY
DEBATES

Main Stories:

Al Quds leads with Kadima Party leader Livni's announcement Sunday calling for early elections after failing to form a coalition government. In a separate article, the paper quotes President Mubarak of Egypt saying that the elections in the U.S. and Israel will "provide us additional time to move" toward achieving Palestinian unity. All three papers carry reports on their inside pages quoting senior Fatah official Ahmad Qurei saying: "Fatah wants dialogue, not confrontation with Hamas," adding that Fatah will take a "conciliatory approach to its rival Hamas, even while negotiations with Israel continue."

Al Ayyam leads with a report that U.S. helicopters carried out an airstrike inside Syrian territories near the Iraqi borders on Sunday. The article cites a report by the official Syrian news agency SANA that at least seven Syrians were killed and several others injured in the Al-Bukamal area. The article notes that Pentagon officials refused to comment on the incident.

Al Ayyam front-pages an interview with LTG Dayton quoting him expressing confidence in the ongoing efforts to establish a Palestinian state while praising the performance of the PA security services in Jenin. Dayton is also quoted dismissing criticism by Hamas that his mission aims to end the movement's existence. The lengthy interview also addresses Dayton's experience and his calls to strengthen the PA security forces to "avoid surprises as happened in Gaza." Dayton is quoted stating that the PA security success in Jenin would allow people to refocus on improving the economy and their lives.

The three papers carry front-page reports that Israeli settlers

attacked Palestinians near Hebron and desecrated a Muslim graveyard following the evacuation of a settlement outpost by the IDF near the Kiryat Arba settlement.

Al Quds carries the findings of a public opinion poll that shows 63 percent of Palestinians are satisfied with President Abbas' performance, and 55 percent support holding new legislative elections. The poll was conducted by the Arab World Center for Research and Development during the month of October.

The three papers front-page reports, with Al Hayat Al Jadida leading with large photos, of the Palestinian national soccer game held in Al-Ram in the West Bank yesterday, in which the Palestinian national team played against the Jordanian team. The game ended in a 1-1 tie. The coverage highlighted the attendance of FIFA President Joseph Blatter, noting that FIFA's Goal program has financed, in part, the renovation and construction of two football stadiums, one in Al-Ram and the other in Al-Bireh near Ramallah.

The three dailies report on their inside pages that dozens of mental health specialists from Canada, the U.S., Holland, Italy and the UK protested at the Erez crossing yesterday against Israel's closure of the Gaza Strip and its refusal to allow a medical conference from taking place in Gaza.

STORIES FROM THE WEEKEND PRESS

Sunday, October 26, 2007

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The three dailies report that Palestinian Prime Minister Fayyad welcomed the "Egyptian paper" which presents a proposal to end the Palestinian division and called for its immediate implementation. Fayyad is also quoted calling on Hamas to "steer away from pre-conditions and avoid procrastination."

Al-Ayyam quotes Hamas senior leader Mahmoud Az-Zahhar at the Rafah crossing on Saturday, October 27, saying that he did not expect Egypt to make any changes to its proposal for reconciliation among the Palestinian factions, "despite comments and the reservations expressed by several parties, including Hamas itself." Azzahar added that Hamas has objected to the PLO as the sole legitimate representative of the Palestinians unless it is reformed to include all the active factions, including Hamas and Islamic Jihad.

Saturday, October 25, 2007

Al-Quds quotes Akrama Sabri, Chairman of the Higher Islamic Council, warning Palestinians from Jerusalem against resorting to Israeli courts in their land and property disputes. Sabri said the Israeli authority, known as the "Custodian of Absentee Property," may misuse the court system to seize those properties. The reports note that Sabri had announced an edict placing blame on any Palestinian who causes the loss of property through the Custodian of Absentee Property.

Al-Quds reports that Secretary Rice will soon travel on a new tour to the region during which she will meet with Israeli and Palestinian officials to "encourage them to conclude a peace agreement." The article quotes State Department spokesman Robert Wood saying that Rice's visit to the region will certainly occur before the end of Bush's term.

BLOCK QUOTES:

Columnist Samih Shbib opines in Al Ayyam under the title "Political stagnation in Israel" that "It's worth mentioning that the Israeli interest has turned to managing the crisis [with the Palestinians] and not solving it. During his term, Ariel Sharon tried to solve the conflict through the 'Defensive shield' but politically he

failed....Israel has no political vision for the a final settlement with the Palestinians. If Likud enters office, it still won't find any other alternative but to do crisis management."

Columnist Hasa Al Batal opines in Al Ayyam on the much-debated PA security deployment in Hebron under the title "Starting with a new security concept." Batal argues that "at a stage like this one, it happens that some of those harmed [by enforcing security] on the two sides make conflicting protests...but meet in the end. Those, on our side, are benefiting from chaos in the name of 'resistance', and those on [the Israeli] side benefit from settlement chaos in the name of their right to abuse the land. [Both have] political projects, both of the harmed sides play object to security coordination and to political negotiations. [I]n principle ...civil security [should come] first followed by national security, sovereignty security and finally regional security."

Mohamad Jalal Enaya opined in Al Quds under the title "Recognizing the Arab initiative...and the horrifying alternatives" says "The best way [for Hamas] to get out of its political crisis... is to

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recognize the Arab peace initiative (declared in Beirut in 2002). [O]therwise the alternatives are terrifying -- wars that consume people and everything on the Palestinian land".

Walles